

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF MILY ALEXEYEVICH BALAKIREV'S MUSICAL
STYLE IN HIS EARLY PIANO AND ORCHESTRA WORKS: *GRANDE*
FANTAISIE ON RUSSIAN FOLK SONGS AND
CONCERTO OP. 1 IN F# MINOR

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2007

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Kim, Miyang. *An analytical study of Mily Alekseyevich Balakirev's musical style in his early piano and orchestra works: Grande Fantaisie on Russian Folk Songs and Concerto Op.1 in F# Minor*. Doctor of Musical Arts (Performance), May 2007, 31 pp., 13 musical examples, 2 figures, references, 33 titles.

Balakirev's two early piano and orchestra works, *Grande Fantaisie on Russian Folk Songs* and *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor*, were composed in the middle of the nineteenth century when in Russia there were no particularly important works for piano and orchestra. Balakirev was still a teenager when he wrote these two pieces and unfortunately both remained unfinished. However the beauty and remarkable compositional achievement of these works should be highly recognized.

There are six chapters in this essay. The general background, purpose and the state of research are discussed in the first chapter. The second chapter presents Balakirev's biographical information and the overview of his works for piano and orchestra is stated in Chapter III. Individual works, *Grande Fantaisie* and *Concerto in F# Minor* are discussed in the chapters IV and V, which including discussing compositional background, analysis and diagram of structural schemes. The last chapter concludes with Balakirev's contribution to Russian music and the development of the Russian concerto coming into its own. It deals particularly with Balakirev's approach to folk songs, which gives the concerto a unique Russian aesthetic, in addition to his ability to write in the European tradition.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	v
 Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. BIOGRAPHY	3
III. BALAKIREV'S WORKS FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA.....	6
IV. <i>GRAND FANTAISIE ON RUSSIAN FOLK SONGS</i>	9
Compositional Background	9
Analysis.....	10
V. <i>CONCERTO OP. 1 IN F# MINOR</i>	16
Compositional Background	16
Analysis.....	17
VI. CONCLUSION.....	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY	29

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

	Page
1. Original Form of Russian Folk Songs <i>Akh, ne solnyshko zatmilos and Sredi doliny rovnye</i>	22
2. <i>Grande Fantaisie</i> , mm. 87-89.....	22
3. <i>Grande Fantaisie</i> , mm. 99-101.....	23
4. <i>Grande Fantaisie</i> , mm. 125-126.....	23
5. <i>Grande Fantaisie</i> , m. 137	24
6. <i>Grande Fantaisie</i> , mm. 182-184.....	24
7. <i>Grande Fantaisie</i> , mm. 227-229.....	25
8. <i>Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor</i> , mm. 331-332.....	25
9. <i>Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor</i> , mm. 90-92.....	26
10. <i>Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor</i> , mm. 126-130.....	26
11. <i>Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor</i> , mm. 200-202.....	27
12. <i>Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor</i> , mm. 233-234.....	27
13. <i>Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor</i> , mm. 257-258.....	28

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
1. Diagram of Structural Scheme in <i>Grande Fantaisie on Russian Folk Songs</i>	15
2. Diagram of Structural Scheme in <i>Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor</i>	20

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This critical essay covers piano and orchestra music by Mily Alekseyevich Balakirev (1837-1910) who was a leader within the Russian nationalist musical movement of the nineteenth century. Its members were known as the 'Могучая кучка' ('Mighty Handful') and included Nikolai Andreyevich Rimski-Korsakov, César Cui, Modest Mussorgski, and Alexander Borodin. "Mily Balakirev was a figure of great influence in the history of Russian music. As a composer, conductor, leader and educator, he had far-reaching influence on the development of Russian music. In fact, it is possible that no other nineteenth-century Russian musical figure so greatly influenced the lives of Russian musicians as did Balakirev."¹

Balakirev's piano and orchestra works, especially the first two works, are still not well known to performers and audiences, but are significant both musically and historically because of the specific Russian nationalistic style he used in the *Grande Fantaisie*, and in contrast the Western traditional style as seen in the *Concerto in F# Minor*. His works for piano and orchestra have not drawn much scholarly attention, but because of the significance of these pieces they are in need of research and study. "V.V. Stasov claims that Russian music might have taken another direction had it not been for Balakirev's influence."²

Balakirev's biographical information is available in a number of reference sources such as *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, and *The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians*. The author Edward Garden wrote a book and a few articles about Balakirev's life and works. Written in 1967, the book is titled *A Critical Study of His Life and Music*. Garden's articles, entitled "Three Russian

¹ V. Breheda, *The Original Solo Piano Works of Mily Balakirev* (D.M.A. thesis, University of Washington, 1984), 2.

² V.V. Stasov, *Selected Essays on Music* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1968), 96.

Concertos” in *Music & Letters* (1979), and “Russian Folksong and Balakirev’s 1866 Collection” in *Soundings* (1983-1984), only discuss Russian folk song related material. Jeremy Norris’ book entitled *The Russian Piano Concerto Volume 1: The Nineteenth Century* covers general outlines of all Balakirev’s piano and orchestra works, and the article, “A Note on Balakirev’s Piano Concerto” in *The Musical Times* (1990) is about the relationships between Russian Folk song themes in Russian piano concerti by other Russian composers. The only thesis concerning Balakirev’s piano music was written in 1977 by Vera Breheda, and is entitled *The Original Solo Piano Works of Mily Balakirev*. Breheda’s dissertation covers only Balakirev’s solo piano music.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY

Balakirev was a self-taught musician, but several composers, such as Chopin, Liszt, Glinka, Beethoven and Schumann influenced him deeply. In his early years his mother was his first music teacher, but he also received additional music lessons from Alexander Ivanovich Dubuque, John Field's pupil and the latter in turn taught Rachmaninoff, Scriabin and Ziloti. Both Balakirev and Tchaikovsky dedicated piano works to him. Dubuque incidentally taught Balakirev Hummel's *A Minor Piano Concerto* with Field's fingering.³ Balakirev later used to say: "If I have any technical ability at all, I am indebted for this to A. I. Dubuque, who taught me the principles of correct technique and fingering on the pianoforte."⁴ Balakirev was part of a vibrant musical community; he took music lessons from Karl Eisrich, a local music teacher and conductor, who conducted the local theatre orchestra at musical events at the house of a landowner, Alexander Dmitriyevich Ulybyshev. Ulybyshev had written a book on Mozart in 1844 and later wrote one on Beethoven in 1857. Eisrich arranged music for the local concerts and it was through association with him that Balakirev heard Chopin's *E Minor Piano Concerto* for the first time. He was affected so deeply by the piece, which in old age Balakirev re-orchestrated it for a concert on the occasion of the centenary of Chopin's birth in February 1910.⁵ The influence of Chopin is apparent in his piano solo music in which he cultivated all the genres developed by Chopin, such as waltzes, mazurkas, scherzos, nocturnes, with the exception of ballade. Another composer who influenced Balakirev was Franz Liszt, especially with his piano writing, piano transcriptions, and orchestral works such as the symphonic poem. However, Balakirev's symphonic poem *Tamara* is considered to be an orchestral composition based on

³ Edward Garden, *Balakirev: A Critical Study of His Life and Music* (London: Faber, 1967), 23.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

folk themes belonging more properly with Glinka and Balakirev.⁶ Eisrich introduced Balakirev to Glinka's Grand Trio from *A Life for the Tsar*, and Balakirev finally met Glinka himself in 1855 through Ulybyshev. According to Ludmila Ivanovna Shestakova, Glinka's sister, the relationship between Glinka and Balakirev was supportive. She recorded Balakirev's meetings with her brother and said that "my brother was delighted with Balakirev's Fantasia on themes from *A Life for the Tsar*."⁷ Initially, when Balakirev was gathering folk material, Glinka provided him with some Spanish folk themes rather than Russian material, and it is only later that explicit native ambitions manifested themselves, once the feeling of Russian distinctiveness from the European tradition had grown stronger.⁸ Balakirev promoted musical nationalism quite forcefully and in so doing provoked the ire of the academics from the conservatory and the Russian Musical Society, which was founded by Anton Rubinstein in 1859, predecessor of the St. Petersburg Conservatory. He did, however succeed Anton Rubinstein as the conductor of the Russian Musical Society symphony concerts and became director of the Free School in 1868, originally established in 1862. His idea was to have a school in opposition to the Russian Musical Society. In May 1869, however, Balakirev was forced to resign his conductorship due to the unpopularity of his overbearing manner and his excessive promotion of nationalism. It was at this point that Balakirev became reclusive and started avoiding friends and family because of an emotional and spiritual crisis that overtook his sensibilities and led to a long period of creative stasis. It was then that he took a job with the Warsaw Railway and apparently lost interest in music. However, he eventually resumed directorship of the Free School in 1882. In addition to

⁶ Stuart Campbell, "Balakirev, Mily Alekseyevich," in Stanley Sadie, ed., *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 2001), II, 513.

⁷ Edward Garden, *Balakirev: A Critical Study of His Life and Music* (London: Faber, 1967), 31.

⁸ Stuart Campbell, 514.

this appointment he also became director of the Court Chapel where he did administrative duty and also made transcriptions and arrangements of ancient liturgical chants.

Only in 1895 was Balakirev able to follow his own interests after his resignation from the Court Chapel. It was in October 1894 that Balakirev made his final public appearance playing Chopin's *Sonata in Bb Minor* at the dedication of the Chopin memorial at the Żelazow Wola in Warsaw. This had been a project in which he had played a major part. He resumed his compositional efforts in 1896. This was when he composed the majority of his piano works and worked on some orchestral pieces that had been abandoned 25 years earlier. A second movement was added to his *Piano Concerto No. 2 in Eb Major* in 1909. The first movement was revised, which had originally been started in 1861. The finale was completed and orchestrated by Lyapunov, as Balakirev died in May 1910 before he could complete it.⁹

⁹ V. Breheda, *The Original Solo Piano Works of Mily Balakirev* (D.M.A. thesis, University of Washington, 1984), 14-17.

CHAPTER III

BALAKIREV'S WORKS FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA

Balakirev composed a total of three piano and orchestra works. The first two works, *Grande Fantaisie on Russian Folk Songs* and *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor*, which will be discussed in detail in other chapters, remained incomplete. The last work, *Concerto in Eb Major*, was started by Balakirev in 1861, but he could not complete it until his pupil Lyapunov took over and finished it in 1909 and published it in 1911.

Grande Fantaisie on Russian Folk Songs is the earliest piece Balakirev ever wrote for the piano. Fifteen-year-old Balakirev challenged himself using two Russian folk songs and worked them into a theme and variations. The piece was written from 1852 to 1853, and Balakirev intended to complete the piece later, but there is no trace of a further sketch. The second folk song remains undeveloped as a theme without variations.

The next work of importance is his *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor*. The most remarkable thing about this concerto is the fact that Balakirev did not use any folk song material. The piece remains an unfinished single movement concerto. Balakirev's admiration of Chopin is shown clearly in this piece. He might have been more concerned with Russian folk song development at that time, especially after he met Glinka right before he completed the concerto.

Balakirev's last piano and orchestra work in E^b major was begun in June 1861. He was examining several piano and orchestra works by other composers for guidance in matters of orchestration, piano technique, and combining piano with orchestra. The pieces he examined were Liszt's *Piano Concerto in E^b Major*, Rubinstein's *Second Piano Concerto, Op. 35*, and Litolf's *Fourth Piano Concerto (Concerto symphonique)*. Balakirev after examining Liszt's *Piano Concerto in Eb Major*, said in a communication to Stasov, from whom he had requested

existing scores by other composers, that after examining Liszt's *Piano Concerto in Eb Major*, "One can learn much in the use of piano and orchestra from that work."¹⁰ At the end of 1862, Balakirev finished composing the first movement, and the second movement was only outlined; then for the third movement, he sketched and made a plan.¹¹ This work was completed almost fifty years later by Lyapunov with Balakirev's permission. The concerto certainly has the signs of referred ideas from those concerti that Balakirev already studied and shows that he was deeply affected by these pieces. Rubinstein's second concerto may have given him the idea of using the fugato in the first and the finale movements, and Litolff's slow movement, *Andante religioso*, could have affected Balakirev's beautiful second movement in which Balakirev used the Russian Orthodox chant 'So sviatymi upokoi,' as the main theme. At that time Litolff was an active composer who named the single movement piano and orchestra work, *Concerto symphonique*. The concept of the symphony applies throughout the piece; therefore, the piano part is more like an obligato and the main thematic material is presented by the orchestra. Liszt adapted the style of his piano and orchestra works in the style of Litolff, whom he admired. Liszt's own *Concerto No.1 in Eb Major* was dedicated to Litolff. As mentioned before, Liszt's influence on Balakirev was not only limited to piano works, but he also appeared to have influenced his symphonic works such as the symphonic poem. Balakirev's symphonic poem *Tamara*, which is based on the poem by Lermontov, was dedicated to Liszt. In the book *Russian Piano Concerto*, Jeremy Norris describes the similarity between Litolff's and Balakirev's slow movements:

- (1) Both movements begin with a short introduction (Litolff 5 bars, Balakirev 6 bars) and then modulate to the tonic key.
- (2) Both introductions overlap the principal subject of the movements by one bar.

¹⁰ Jeremy Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto Volume I: The Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 60.

¹¹ Edward Garden, *Balakirev: A Critical Study of His Life and Music* (London: Faber, 1967), 254.

- (3) Both initial solo statements of the principal subject are in the form of arpeggiated chords.
- (4) Both development sections are entirely based on the principal subject.
- (5) Both recapitulations commence with a *tutti* statement of the principal subject accompanied by similarly scored octave chords in the soloist's part.¹²

Considering that the third movement was composed by Lyapunov under Balakirev's guidance in 1909 and published in 1911, the orchestration and texture of the third movement is distinguishable from the first movement. Essentially the third movement is more thickly orchestrated and the texture is more complex.

¹² Jeremy Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto Volume I: The Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 60-61

CHAPTER IV

GRANDE FANTASIE ON RUSSIAN FOLK SONGS

Compositional Background

During the middle of the nineteenth century, the concerto in Russia suffered from a lack of development in comparison to compositional efforts at the same time in Europe. Russia was isolated and had no clear tradition of symphonic music. Variation structure was common in compositions and themes from Russian folk songs were often used. Factors that limited the development of a truly indigenous style of concerto writing were an overemphasis on technical display; a lack of complex compositional structure and the relegation of the orchestra to a lesser role in order to make the soloist feature more prominently. The concerto until this point in time had largely been used to entertain the aristocracy and was written with a view to accessibility and thus was fairly simple. The effort to impress the audience compromised a true aesthetic in terms of new composition and it was only when *Grande Fantaisie* was composed by Balakirev that a new style grew to prominence. This work is based on two Russian folk tunes, *Akh, ne solnyshko zatmilos* (“Ah! The sun is not eclipsed”) and *Sredi doliny rovnye* (“Down in the valley”) (Example 1), and he finished it in 1853. At the end of the score Balakirev wrote “Finis del primo partito Auctor Milius Balakireff” (“Completion of the first part by the composer Mily Balakirev”), indicating that he intended to add to it, but he never did. In the same year, 1852, that Balakirev started this piece, Adolf Henselt, who had moved from Germany to St. Petersburg in 1838, composed *Variations for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 11*, on “Quand je quittai la Normandie,” This was based on Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable*. This piece may have given Balakirev the concept of composing on Russian themes. The *Grande Fantaisie* is dedicated to Karl Eisrich.

In the book *A History of the Concerto*, the author Michael T. Roeder expressed the following about Russian nationalistic music:

The Russian nationalist composers were intent upon skirting the Germanic style of motivic development, which led them to approach traditional Western musical forms in quite different ways. In place of the emphasis on motivic development, these composers preferred a mode of decorative variation that became the foundation of the Russian national style, extending all the way to the work of the twentieth-century composer Igor Stravinsky. In this style, the orchestral settings and/or accompaniments are altered as the short tunes are repeated, but the tunes themselves usually remain unchanged. Because of their interest in this approach, the Russian nationalists admired the work of Liszt, Berlioz, Chopin, and, to an extent, Schumann, over that of Brahms, Mendelssohn, and Beethoven, since the music of the first group was thought to exhibit similar tendencies toward decorative variation.¹³

The *Grande Fantaisie* is one of the earliest large-scale works that Balakirev composed. The piece did not come easily, and it is evident from the various inks used on the manuscript and from additional pencil markings, that the piece had been composed at different periods and that passages had been rewritten many times over. Even the tempo markings at the beginning of the piece changed several times from *Larghetto-maestoso* to *Allegretto*, which was crossed out again and changed to *Andantino*.¹⁴ The level of compositional accomplishment on the piece is relatively unsophisticated; however, considering that this piece was composed when Balakirev was fifteen years old, it is clear that he had a lot of potential in composition even at an early age.

Analysis

In bravura style composition, variations generally allow the player's virtuosity to be displayed. Through their diversity of thematic transformation, the variations may be revealed as complex structures and demand of the listener intense efforts of comprehension.¹⁵

¹³ Thomas Michael Roeder, *A History of the Concerto* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1994), 292.

¹⁴ Jeremy Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto Volume I: The Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 55.

¹⁵ Hugo Leichtentritt, *Musical Form* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 95.

Characteristically, repetition is the dominant feature of the variation. A theme is stated and then repeated a number of times, each time in a new way. There are two distinguishable types of variation. First, there is the ornamented variation in which brilliance and virtuosity are displayed. Second is the characteristic variation in which there is much thematic transformation. The ornamented variation retains the harmonic basis of the theme yet changes the melodic line into figurations, passage work, and arabesques. The characteristic variation transforms the theme into something entirely new, each time giving it a totally different character. Although the variation may stray from the theme, it never loses contact with it. Many works in variation form combine these two styles.¹⁶

Balakirev had an obsession with keys having two sharps and five flats. The first folk song was set in the key of Bb minor. In *Balakirev: A Critical Study of His Life and Music*, Edward Garden stated that both Chopin and Glinka are fond of these keys, but Balakirev used them more frequently.¹⁷

The folk theme is not changed throughout the piece nor is the harmonic scheme. Balakirev followed the sonority of tertian harmony in the Western European tradition. He employs some of the same harmonic and stylistic features of his folk-song arrangements in his overtures and symphonic poems based on folk themes, and they also influenced his work in other fields. An *ostinato* accompaniment is to be found for instance in the *Overture on Three Russian Songs*, and in the symphonic poem, *Russia*, and also in the second movement of the second symphony. *Tamara*'s oboe theme is also accompanied by an *ostinato*-like figure, although it is

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Edward Garden, *Balakirev: A Critical Study of His Life and Music* (London: Faber, 1967), 305.

not a folk theme.¹⁸ An *ostinato* accompaniment pattern was used in the introduction of the *Grande Fantaisie*.

There are three small sections in the introduction. The piece starts with brass sounds in a fanfare-like style, then the first section starts in the piano part with a gentle left hand commencing with an arpeggiated figure in Bb minor. The main melodic material in the second section of the introduction is the descending four notes, F-Eb-Db-Ab, with a leaping left hand accompaniment in a different tempo, namely *Allegro assai*. Balakirev used a pedal tone Db throughout the introduction, and according to Garden, “This fondness for pedals probably springs, in the main, from two sources: first, Glinka was also fond of pedals, much of his more inspired music, particularly of the ‘Eastern’ variety, being written over a pedal; and second, his early overture on Russian song shows that he considered from the start that a pedal was an eminently suitable bass for a folk-song.”¹⁹ The fanfare-like transition in F major *Allegro furioso* (the third section) appears right before the main folk theme, *Akh, ne solnyshko zatmilos*, played by the oboe solo with pizzicato strings in Bb minor, which remains constant up to Variation III. The piano plays the theme with an arpeggiated glissando figure with orchestra (Example 2) which is still playing pizzicato in the strings. The orchestra ritornello is a restatement of the last passage of the theme. The first variation starts with energetic figuration in the piano part in the form of broken chords (Example 3), then moving sixteenth notes alternate from left hand to right hand while the main theme is alternately played in the piano part and the orchestra part. This variation has the tightest and most dynamic relationship between the piano and orchestra. The same ritornello appears after the first variation. The second variation is only for piano solo

¹⁸ Edward Garden, 302.

¹⁹ Edward Garden, *Balakirev: A Critical Study of His Life and Music* (London: Faber, 1967), 304.

which has a written indication of “Quasi improvisatio” on the score, and the main theme is played in the middle voice amongst the octaves and chords (Example 4).

In the recent edition by Joseph Banowetz, the main theme is clearly marked in the score with the indication [^]. Here the first four repeated notes of the main theme are displayed on the middle beat. The low range of the left hand gives a deep and heavy texture and the right hand at the end of the variation joins up with the same pattern as the left hand which creates an even thicker texture. The ritornello is omitted between variation II and variation III, and there are simple dominant chords which lead to the next variation. Variation III has the left hand figure as the last part of the previous variation which is in the low bass and the chords are in inversion with an arpeggiated right hand (Example 5).

In this variation, the orchestra’s role is subdued until the piano plays the arpeggiated passage with both hands. The main theme is played in the middle range of the piano by both hands alternately while the left hand plays inverted chords and an arpeggiated figure is on the right hand. The key of Bb minor changes to Bb major by modal shift. This common feature of the Russian folk song in which the neutral third changes the mode occurs in this piece as well. The ritornello D^b tonicization links to the next variation with a new tempo (*Adagio*) and a new time signature (6/8), which Balakirev did not indicate as variation IV (Example 6). However, the part is distinguished from the previous variation because the theme is fully played again and has a short ritornello section before the theme starts in the key of D^b major, which is the relative key of B^b minor. A hemiola rhythm was used in the beginning of the orchestra ritornello composed in three beats instead of in two.

Balakirev used romantic style of piano writing which includes the arpeggiated pattern of the left hand in accompaniment and the free style recitative passage. This variation is the last

variation based on the theme of *Akh, ne solnyshko zatmilos*. At first, the theme is played by the right hand, then the orchestra takes it over when the piano part has a scale patterned passage that combines with major and chromatic scales and arpeggios. There is no transition between these two different themes. Balakirev used enharmonic note C#, for the beginning note of the second theme with new tempo *Larghetto*. The second folk song, *Sredi doliny rovnye*, is played solely by the piano (Example 7) and the orchestra appears only at the last seven bars of the coda section. This second folk song theme is placed in the middle range between the left hand's octave and the right hand's chords in inversion, and then the theme gets a thicker texture by doubling the theme in octaves and adding additional left hand chords in inversion. According to Garden, "One of the most important of Balakirev's characteristics, in developing a theme or in concluding a piece, is to darken it, to probe its depths in deeper shades, perhaps shades of purple and crimson rather than of duller grays and blues. It could be described as a ripening process of what may initially be a luscious fruit, or just a rather ordinary berry."²⁰ Later the theme is taken over on top with the right hand in chords and the chords in inversions are played by the left hand. This whole theme is in F# minor. Some patterns, such as the left hand's accompaniment pattern and right hand's arpeggiated broken chords and chords in inversions seem overused and repetitive, which gives an impression of a lack of inventiveness.

Harmonically Balakirev was very much a traditionalist and did not try to use any other chromatic chords except the diminished chord. There are sections, especially in the orchestra part, where sound is lacking in terms of texture and structure. However, Balakirev's style of writing for piano shows that he had a bravura approach and that his compositional thoughts were virtuosic in conception.

²⁰ Edward Garden, *Balakirev: A Critical Study of His Life and Music* (London: Faber, 1967), 305.

Figure 1. *Diagram of Structural Scheme in Grande Fantaisie on Russian Folk Songs*

Themes with Balakirev's accompaniment

Akh, ne solnyshko zatmilos

Bb Minor: i-----V----i-----V/bIII-----bIII-----V-----I-----V-----iv-----V
V-----i-----bVI-----III-----bVI-----bIII-----V/bIII-----bIII

Sredi doliny rovnye

F# Minor: i-----V-----i-----i-----V/bIII-----bIII
-----V/bIII-----ii⁰⁷---i-----iv---V---i

Introduction (mm.1)

Theme (Orchestra + Piano)(mm.77)

Akh, ne solnyshko zatmilos

Db Major [bIII] F Major [V]

Bb Minor [i]

Ritornello (mm.98) . Variation I (mm.101) . Ritornello (mm.123) .

Bb Minor

Variation II (mm.125) , Variation III (mm.137) . Adagio (mm.175) .

Bb Major

Bb Minor

Db Major

Theme (Piano)(mm.228)

Sredi doliny rovnye

F# Minor

CHAPTER V

CONCERTO OP. 1 IN F# MINOR

Compositional Background

In the 1850s Anton Rubinstein's *Piano Concerto No. 1* provided evidence of an independent compositional tradition in Russia. Up until this time Russia had some experience of early romantic concertos written by expatriate composers such as John Field, Daniel Steibelt and touring composer/pianists such as John Nepomuk Hummel and Adolf Henselt. Balakirev started to compose *Concerto Op. 1* even before the *Grande Fantaisie*, but completed the first movement sometime during 1855-1856 and revised the piece in 1857.

In Balakirev's early concerto movements, there are two important influences on his musical development: his spending long hours in the library of Alexander Ulybyshev, and attending the concerts at Ulybyshev's residence, and listening to the music of Mozart, Field, Mendelssohn, and Hummel. Of particular note was the occasion when Balakirev heard Chopin's *E Minor Concerto*, which strongly influenced his piano writing.²¹ The *F# Minor Concerto Op. 1* shows Balakirev's mature bravura style of piano writing discussed next in the analysis section.

He premiered this piece himself playing the piano at a university concert on 12 February 1856 in St. Petersburg. The concert went successfully, and the composer Alexander Serov, later an eager opponent of the nationalists, wrote enthusiastically of the occasion:

Balakirev's composition (the *Allegro* first movement of his concerto in F-sharp minor) was splendidly performed by the composer and was met with sincere enthusiasm by the public. As expected, the success that followed was unqualified, and the audience's appreciation was ardently expressed by tremendous applause. Indeed, one cannot but be delighted with the concerto, for it is poetically conceived, attractively scored, and rich in charming, graceful melodies. Moreover, it was performed with great mastery, tenderness

²¹ Jeremy Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto Volume I: The Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 57.

and yet at the same time, power....Balakirev's talent is a godsend to our country's music.²²

Analysis

The form of this piece is in classic sonata form with a double exposition. A key relationship exists as a relative relationship between F# minor to A major evidenced in the first and second theme of the orchestra ritornello. Then in the second exposition, the key of the second theme goes to D major which is [bVI] of the tonic key. The orchestra tutti hands over the key of D major then moves to A minor, which is [biii] of the key stated initially at the beginning of the development. The piano solo playing is lengthy in this section which could be treated as freely as a cadenza; however a short cadenza which is indicated as such, appears right before the recapitulation in the key of F# minor. In the recapitulation, Balakirev uses the enharmonic key with a modal shift between the first and second themes (F# minor to G^b major). The piece ends in G^b major, and the key relationships between the themes and the sections are fairly formal, however he already showed the mature style of his piano idiom which was later also found in his famous Oriental Fantasy, *Islamey* (Example 8).

The *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor* was composed in the style of the romantic Western tradition. This concerto is much improved in terms of the compositional style of piano writing, exhibiting various kinds of harmonies, and a more interesting relationship between the orchestra and the piano. The beginning of the piano entrance is very much like Chopin's *Concerto in E Minor* in that it features both strong right and left hands with dotted rhythmic octaves followed by running sixteenth broken chords; the first theme is presented after the left hand's accompaniment, then a single melody appears in the right hand (Example 9).

²²Jeremy Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto Volume I: The Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 56

A beautiful and melancholy first theme develops towards a *più mosso* transition section. The transition to the second theme consists of running sixteenth notes, and is technically challenging as well because of the leaping arpeggio figure. The new key signature, D major, is indicated from the second theme, even though the sonority of the melody does not stay very long in D major (Example 10). After the orchestra ritornello, the new key signature A minor, in which it initially starts, appears in the development part (Example 11). The first theme was used in the development, and the key fluctuates throughout. The second theme reappears in the key of Db major which changes immediately to Bb major in the key signature with an arpeggiated figure in the right hand of the piano. Balakirev might have quoted that passage from Chopin's *Etude Op. 10 No.1* (Example 12).

The key signature changes again to C major for four measures then goes to F# minor. The indicated *Cadenza* is considered rather as a short introduction to the recapitulation in F# minor (Example 13).

Balakirev used the same melodic material in transitions both in the exposition and the recapitulation. The second theme in the recapitulation is in Gb major, and Gb major remains constant to the end of the piece. The ending seems to have some weaknesses in that there are only running chromatic scales and trills in the piano section which gives an impression of a lack of inventiveness by the composer, and the orchestra does not play much of a supporting role either.

A frequently changed key in this piece is one of the critical point of Balakirev's compositional style. In the dissertation of Breheda, *The Original Solo Piano Works of Mily Balakirev*,

Typical of Balakirev's musical style are the frequent and sometimes sudden changes in tonality, texture, tempo, and mood. This constant flux sometimes

enhances and enlivens the character of the music, giving it an original and distinct sound. However, in the less successful pieces of Balakirev, especially where the thematic material is weak, these constant fluctuations and vacillations often hinder and weaken the musical content and thus produce confusion and uncertainty of goal and intent.²³

There is a part where the key signature stays only for four measures in the development section and the different key signatures appear one after another. Balakirev's harmonic language in this concerto includes many more chromatic harmonies in comparison to *Grande Fantaisie*, such as diminished seventh, augmented sixth and Neapolitan sixth.

It is not known why Balakirev did not finish this piece, but as mentioned earlier right before he completed the movement, he was introduced to Glinka, whose Russian nationalistic music most influenced Balakirev. Since the F# minor concerto has no trace of any Russian folk music, he probably left the piece behind and moved on to the next composition.²⁴

²³ V. Breheda, *The Original Solo Piano Works of Mily Balakirev* (D.M.A. thesis, University of Washington, 1984), 98.

²⁴ Jeremy Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto Volume I: The Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 58.

Figure 2. *Diagramming of Structural Scheme in Concerto in F# minor*

(Double Exposition)				(Development)		(Recapitulation)	
A	B	A	B	A'	B'	A	B
[i]	[bIII]	[i]	[bVI]	[biii]~~~~	[V]-enh.~	[i]	[I] enh.

Exposition: Orchestra- 1 st Theme F# Minor (mm.1), 2 nd Theme A Major (mm.50)							
[i]				[bIII]			
Piano Intro.(mm.75)		Piano1 st theme (mm.90)		Transition(mm.108)			
iv- vii dim./V- viidim.-i-N6-V--i ~~~~~		~~~~~		A6-V/E-A6-V/E-V/A-V/D			
~~~~~		[i]		~~~~~			
Piano2 nd Theme (mm.127)		Development: (mm.200)		Cadenza (mm.257)			
-I/D		V/V i ~~~~~		A6-V-i		V	
[bVII]		[biii]		[V]enh. [III]enh. [#IV]		[i]	
Recapitulation: 1 st Theme (mm. 261)				Transition (mm.278)			
I		~~~~~i		A6-V/Ab- V/Gb			
[i]				[iii]*key change			
2 nd Theme (mm.298)							
[I] enh.							

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Balakirev's virtuosic concept in piano writing was a style that showed particular maturity in the *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor*. Balakirev showed excellent prowess compositionally both in Western traditional and Russian nationalistic styles as evidenced in his piano and orchestra music, and he created his ideal compositional style by using Russian folk songs mixed with a form of Western European style of composition which essentially resulted in a sophisticated ornamentation of folk song material.

Balakirev's *Grande Fantaisie on Russian Folk Songs* and *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor* are not well known pieces in the repertoire among the piano concerti; however, there are significant and valuable features in his compositional use of the piano and orchestra in terms of harmony, mode, form and orchestration, that makes one consider these pieces as valuable works to program and perform. Of great importance here in the consideration of these pieces is Balakirev's contribution to Russian nationalistic music evident in his use and treatment of folk melody melded into the form heard in his piano and orchestra works. The themes are sublime when heard through his brilliant interpretation which explores the possibilities of the piano and orchestra combination. Also, the tremendous influence of other important composers of the period shows a lineage that demonstrates the essence of musical and technical trends of the time, well expressed to some degree in Balakirev's compositions. As a nationalistic music leader, it is clear that he had a large impact on Russian music and was recognized not only as the "Russian Five", but also by Tchaikovsky and later by Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev. The fact that Balakirev was a self-taught musician probably led to his being artistically free and thus not utterly constrained by the Western musical compositional tradition.

Example 1. Original Form of Russian Folk Songs, *Akh, ne solnyshko zatmilos* and *Sredi doliny rovnye*

*Akh, ne solnyshko zatmilos*



*Sredi doliny rovnye*



Example 2. *Grande Fantaisie*, mm. 87-89.

Two systems of musical notation for Example 2, *Grande Fantaisie*, measures 87-89. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The first system shows measures 87 and 89, with a dynamic marking of *[mp]* in measure 89. The second system shows measures 87 and 89, with a dynamic marking of *[b]* in measure 89. The notation includes treble and bass staves for both systems, with various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

Example 3. *Grande Fantaisie*, mm.99-101.

99

Ritornello

[ff]

101

Variation I  
Allegro

[simile]

101

Variation I  
Allegro

[mf]

Example 4. *Grande Fantaisie*, mm. 125-126.

Variation II *Quasi improvisatio*

125

[mf]

[A]

[simile]

125

Variation II

Example 5. *Grande Fantaisie*, m. 137.

Variation III

137

[f]

Variation III

137

[p]  
pizz.

The musical score for Example 5, Variation III, m. 137, is presented in two systems. The first system shows a piano (p) playing a complex, fast-moving melody in the right hand, marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The left hand plays a supporting bass line. The second system shows the piano playing a pizzicato (pizz.) passage in the right hand, marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The left hand continues with a similar bass line. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4.

Example 6. *Grande Fantaisie*, mm. 182-184.

182

[p]

[simile]

182

The musical score for Example 6, mm. 182-184, is presented in two systems. The first system shows a piano (p) playing a complex, fast-moving melody in the right hand, marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The left hand plays a supporting bass line. The second system shows the piano playing a similar passage in the right hand, marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The left hand continues with a similar bass line. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4.

Example 7. *Grande Fantaisie*, mm. 227-229.

Example 7 shows two systems of musical notation for measures 227-229. The top system includes a treble and bass staff. Measure 227 is marked with a box containing '227', a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking, and a '[pp]' (pianissimo) dynamic. The music features a complex, dense texture with many beamed sixteenth notes. Measure 228 is marked with a box containing '228', a 'lunga pausa' (long pause) marking, and a 'Larghetto' tempo marking. The music continues with a similar dense texture. The bottom system also shows measures 227 and 228, with the same markings and musical notation as the top system.

Example 8. *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor*, mm. 331-332.

Example 8 shows two systems of musical notation for measures 331-332. The top system includes a treble and bass staff. Measure 331 is marked with a 'f' (forte) dynamic. The music features a complex, dense texture with many beamed sixteenth notes. Measure 332 is marked with a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic. The music continues with a similar dense texture. The bottom system also shows measures 331 and 332, with the same markings and musical notation as the top system.

Example 9. *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor*, mm. 90-92.

Meno mosso  
Più moderato

(p)

Meno mosso  
Più moderato

This musical score for measures 90-92 is written for piano. The key signature is F# minor (three sharps). The tempo/mood is marked 'Meno mosso Più moderato'. The score consists of two systems. The first system has a treble staff with a melodic line starting on a whole rest, followed by a half note G#4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4, all under a slur. The bass staff has a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic line in the treble staff with a half note C5, a quarter note D5, and a half note E5, also under a slur. The bass staff continues the eighth-note accompaniment. A dynamic marking of (p) is placed above the first measure of the second system.

Example 10. *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor*, mm. 126-130.

ritard.

Meno mosso  
cantabile amoroso

p dolce

This musical score for measures 126-130 is written for piano. The key signature is F# minor (three sharps). The tempo/mood is marked 'Meno mosso cantabile amoroso'. The score consists of two systems. The first system has a treble staff with a melodic line starting on a whole rest, followed by a half note G#4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4, all under a slur. The bass staff has a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic line in the treble staff with a half note C5, a quarter note D5, and a half note E5, also under a slur. The bass staff continues the eighth-note accompaniment. A dynamic marking of p dolce is placed above the first measure of the second system. A ritardando marking is placed above the first measure of the first system.



Example 11. *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor*, mm. 200-202.

Musical score for Example 11, measures 200-202. The score is for two piano parts, I and II, in F# minor. Part I (piano I) is marked *(p)* and features a melodic line with a slur over measures 200-202. Part II (piano II) is also marked *(p)* and features a bass line with a slur over measures 200-202. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4.

Example 12. *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor*, mm. 233-234.

Musical score for Example 12, measures 233-234. The score is for piano and woodwinds (Flute and Oboe) in F# minor. The piano part features a melodic line with a slur over measures 233-234. The woodwind parts (Flute and Oboe) are marked *Fl.* and *Ob.* respectively. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4.

Example 13. *Concerto Op. 1 in F# Minor*, mm. 257-258.

The image displays a musical score for two pianos, labeled I and II. The key signature is F# minor (three sharps: F#, C#, G#). The score is divided into two systems. The first system, labeled 'Cadenza', features Piano I with a melodic line in the right hand and a supporting line in the left hand, marked with a forte (f) dynamic. Piano II has a rest. The second system continues the melodic development for Piano I, with Piano II providing harmonic support. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings.

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